



# Papua New Guinea Church Partnership Christmas 2023 Newsletter

*PNGCP is the UK-based mission agency dedicated to raising awareness of, and support for, the Anglican Church in PNG*

## ACPNG PARTNERS' VISIT

*This Newsletter patches together a number of first-hand reports and wealth of photos from the recent visit of representatives of ACPNG's external partners from the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Spoiler alert - alongside the more familiar and widespread updates and news, it also contains an updated report of the tragic accident in the Highlands, a contribution from HM King Charles and visual evidence of why 'whiteskins' are so called. But first, an outline introduction to the visit to provide an overall context to the individual contributions:*

At the very beginning of September, key members of a number of ACPNG's main overseas partners gathered for a planned Partners' Meeting at the invitation of the PNG



*Episcopal 'top brass' at the Partners' Meeting: l to r: NZ, Australia, PNG & PNGCP*

Anglican Church. Those able to attend included: from the UK, PNGCP Chair, Bishop Jonathan Meyrick, and PNGCP Trustees, Bishop Peter Ramsden and William Spooner, plus the Acting Chair of the Norwich Diocese PNG Link, Revd Phil Charlesworth; from New Zealand, Bishop Andrew Hedge of Waiapu Diocese, plus a Board member of the H & W Williams Trust; from Australia, the Australian Primate, Archbishop Geoff Smith of Adelaide, the Chairman and a Trustee of the Anglican Board of Mission – Australia (ABM-A) and key staff from that international mission agency. From ACPNG, in the absence of Acting Archbishop Nathan Ingen as he supports his wife recovering from her injuries in Mount Hagen, the visitors were hosted by; Senior Bishop Lindsley Ihove of the Popondota Diocese; NGI Bishop Reginald Makele; Acting General Secretary, Dennis Kabekabe, from the Anglican National Office; and Bishop Jeffrey Driver, retired Archbishop of Adelaide and Acting Principal of Newton Theological College where the meeting was held and the UK contingent stayed.

As will be seen from the individual reports, as well as renewal of many old acquaintanceships, the programme also included a Martyrs' Day visit to the site where nurse May Hayman and teacher Mavis Parkinson were killed by the advancing Japanese and, the following day, a glorious celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the founding of Martyrs Memorial School. For some, visits were also made to the Oro Bay Health Centre; the Visitation Sisters and Franciscan Brothers at their adjacent Hetune sites; the Melanesian Brothers PNG HQ at Dobudoru; and time to appreciate the progress and plans at Newton College.



*Musical welcome during Gona visit*



*Evening meal entertainment at Newton College*



*MBH welcome to Dobudoru*



*+Jeffrey leads prayers after supper for the visitors and college community*



## PARTNERS' MEETING

The intentions of this biennial meeting are broadly: to strengthen awareness and mutual accountability between ACPNG and its external partners and between the external partners themselves; to help ACPNG grow in a planned, successful and sustainable manner; and to optimise the contribution and effectiveness of the external partners in this.

Over three days, a 'business' meeting was held each morning in Newton College library, with afternoon visits to various places and people in the Popondota Diocese, together with much informal exchange. Whilst the visits are reflected elsewhere in the Newsletter, the following are culled from +Jonathan's written report of the Meeting:

- +Jeff gave an inspiring presentation of plans for the future of the 360-acre Newton College site, to reflect ACPNG's three-fold mission of 'preaching, teaching and healing' by adding teacher- and health-care training institutions to the theological training already established there. This is supported by the Government's Higher Education Department.
- whilst there was no representation from either Port Moresby or Dogura dioceses, there was a vibrant video of life within Dogura diocese and, with the November Provincial Council being held there, hopes that a new diocesan bishop would be elected by December.
- +Reg from NGI is planning to attend the Canterbury course for new bishops at the start of 2025, together with the new Dogura bishop.
- with the imminent retirement of Dennis Kabekabe, a new General Secretary is being recruited for ACPNG. The financial situation of the Anglican National Office is improved with the restoration of the Maranatha Trust income.
- +Lindsley shared concerns about rising law and order issues around Popondetta and increasing land ownership disputes. The diocese plans to establish an income-generating guest-house and produce their own communion wafers.
- ++Geoff recently attended a regional gathering of South Pacific Anglican Provinces and was encouraged that, despite the differences, there was a strong mutual commitment.
- recognising the value and advantages of such exchange, the external partners committed to a regular Whats App link, to share information and ideas and better coordinate their individual contributions.



*Some of PNG, UK, Australia & New Zealand participants*



*Preparing mumu for Partners' Meeting at College*

## IN THE STEPS OF THE MARTYRS



*Partners before the station cross at Gona*

Bishop Peter Ramsden writes: "It was very good that the recent Partners' Meeting in Popondetta took place over Martyrs-tide. In UK these days we are probably most familiar with Lucian Tapiedi, whose statue with other 20th century martyrs is on the west front of Westminster Abbey, and Fr Vivian Redlich, a former student of Chichester Theological College and curate at Dewsbury Moor. But in Popondetta the local martyrs, as it were, are May Hayman and Mavis Parkinson. These two young Australians - May, engaged to be married to Fr Vivian, was a nurse and Mavis a teacher – were based on the coast at Gona exactly where the Japanese invaded in July 1942.

In the confusion of evacuating the mission station and subsequent wandering in the bush, they were captured and held in a coffee house near the site of the present day cathedral. Soon after they were killed and buried in a shallow grave.

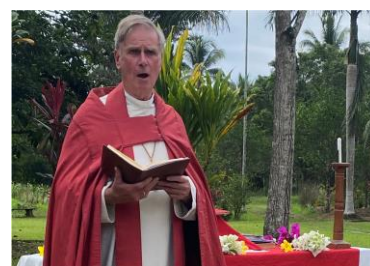
On Martyrs' Day we were able to hold a mass at the site of their execution at the side of the road out to Newton College. Bishop Lindsley presided, Bishop Jonathan preached and I read out the account of their death from the book "The Road from Gona". Alongside me was the grandson of the man who had witnessed this from his hiding-place in the bushes and provided that account."



*+Peter reading the account of their execution*



*+Lindsley at the mass, witness' grandson in blue shirt*



*+Jonathan preaching*



## KING CHARLES REMEMBERS MARTYRS' SCHOOL 75TH ANNIVERSARY



Section of the MMS students at the Eucharist



Memorial Eucharist in the MMS chapel

Bishop Peter Ramsden writes: "This year is the 75th anniversary of Martyrs Memorial School. After the devastation of the Mt Lamington eruption in 1951, it was moved to its present location at Agenahambo on the road from Popondetta to Kokoda. Today, there are 1500 pupils and it has its first woman Principal, Katalina Safitoa.

A famous old boy of the school was Prince Charles, who attended with a group of fellow Geelong Grammar School students in 1966. As the recent Partners' Meeting was taking place in Popondetta at the time of the anniversary, I wrote to Buckingham Palace to ask if HM the King would like to send the school his congratulations. I received a letter from his correspondence secretary the day before I left home, which I was happy to read out during the celebration at the school. In part it read:



MMS Oro student dancers in tapa cloth

*"The King was heartened to be reminded of the fond memories he holds from his time visiting Martyrs' School in 1966. In return, His Majesty has asked me to send his warm good wishes to all those who will be present for a most memorable and enjoyable gathering."*

That Sunday, 3rd September, together with local dignitaries and other visitors, we joined the community at Martyrs' Memorial School for its annual service and day remembering the Anglican Church's Martyrs from the 1940's. The Eucharist in the school chapel was presided over by Bishop Andrew, with Archbishop Geoff preaching. This moving event was followed by a splendid lunch and an afternoon of dancing and entertainment from the pupils, of fundraising and meetings with staff and students. The campus tour included the new May Hayman classroom block, completed with a generous grant from the Scottish Episcopal Church and PNGCP."



Headteacher Katalina and fundraising mast



Waiting for the Martyrs School 75th celebration to start



MMS campus with yellow chapel hall



Classrooms with new May Hayman block in centre



## NORWICH LINK VISIT

*Acting Chair of the PNG Link in the Norwich Diocese, Revd Phil Charlesworth, writes: "In August-September 2023, I had the privilege to represent the diocese of Norwich at the PNG Partners' Meeting at Newton Theological College (NTC) in Popondota diocese. Norwich diocese supports projects across the world through an annual Lent Appeal but in even-numbered years this is usually directed at the Anglican Church in PNG. In 2024, we hope to provide some student house repairs and water tanks for NTC. In addition, each appeal also funds visits by UK Anglicans to PNG (as in the 2015 pilgrimage) and visits by PNG Anglicans to UK (as in the visit of Frs. Giles and Luscomb from NTC in 2017 and ACPNG's Gender Empowerment Officers, Jesicah and Macinta, in 2014); some funds are also allocated to the Provincial Office for general use.*

2023 was my third visit to PNG and it was fascinating to attend the Partners' Meeting with two archbishops, five bishops, other clergy and lay people with such a strong commitment to serving the Lord through serving our brothers and sisters in the province of PNG. Each time I have visited the altar-stone marking the site where two Anglicans, nurse May Hayman and teacher Mavis Parkinson, were martyred. On this occasion, we were honoured to attend a eucharist on the site on the eighty-first anniversary of their deaths. Also, we heard a very moving account from a local man whose grandfather, hiding in nearby bushes, had witnessed events on that fateful day in 1942. It was a poignant reminder that Christians are still dying for their faith the world over in response to our Lord who gave his life for us upon a cross.

Much has changed and little has changed since my first visit in 2009: Port Moresby continues to expand its buildings and road network so that it resembles, more and more, any other busy city in the world, but village life remains much the same as it has been for centuries, with some small concessions to modernity, especially mobile phones. Unfortunately, in a nation rich in natural resources, exploited by multinational companies, the medical facilities at Oro Bay still suffering from chronic underfunding. They don't even have enough money to buy fuel for the generators to pump water into the header tanks to feed the busy health-centre and they are unable to fund a regular doctor. Despite this, the nurses and other staff do an amazing job of caring for the local population, especially mothers and babies.

Any visit to PNG should include worship and commemorations on Martyrs Day, 2nd September, and this was also observed in grand style at Martyrs' School on the occasion of their 75th anniversary, followed by displays of traditional dances that the students had obviously practised over many weeks."



*+Peter & Phil with College staff & students in front of chapel*



*NTC students Q&A sessions with Fr Giles & +Jeffrey*



*Welcome from local women at Dobudoru*



## FIRST TIME TO PNG



*William & Sr. Edna in the Sisters' chapel*

*PNGCP Trustee, William Spooner, shares the following observations from his recent first visit to PNG and the work of the Anglican Church there:*

"You're a Pom, aren't you? Not a bible basher, I hope..." So said my next-door neighbour on the Air Niugini flight from Manila to Port Moresby. Not wishing to be familiar on the second topic of conversation, Australia 'winning' The Ashes, I demurred. This and the cabin crew requesting for passengers not to chew betel nut in the toilets made it clear I was no longer in the skies above Europe.

Air Niugini operates an erratic timetable. It was therefore an achievement that the partners from England (us with the Diocese of Norwich), Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, with Bishop Reg Makele and Dennis Kabekabe (Provincial Secretary) travelling from New Guinea Islands and Lae respectively, could be in one place at one time. Somehow it happened and we all convened, together with Popondota Bishop Lindsley Ihove, at Newton Theological College outside Popondetta. The Aussies and

Kiwis were as new to me in ways of life as the PNG folk.

That Newton College works is a thanks to the leadership efforts of Bishop Jeffrey, Fr Giles and Fr Luscomb. Indeed, not just works, but thrives. The Chapel, the Library and the Mothers' Union (MU) set the pace of life. The enthusiasm of the ordinands, their desire for knowledge (those selected to stay on for a fourth year are delighted) and the visible role of the MU gives great hope. An ordinand recounted how his grandfather worked with Bishop David Hand. It felt like a continuation of the story. I soon became an 'errand boy' with messages to take home, to London, the Franciscans at Hillfield and elsewhere in the UK.

What I learnt is that the Church, be it here in the British Isles or elsewhere, is at its best as a church among, by, for and with people. Open eyes mean there can be no other way. In the PNG context, it is Newton College that makes this happen. That we, at PNGCP, for the financial year ending December 2023 were the largest single internal or external donor to College shows the good we do.

'Down south' in PNG speak means Australia, and the Australian presence is significant. A large diplomatic mission and with Australian soldiers visible at airports, transiting to and from commitments, the relationship cannot go unnoticed. Politics is for others, but a degree in political science is not needed to see the dynamics. Those of us who call the British Isles home are perhaps fortunate that history, the 10,000 miles and 36-hour flight between us and PNG makes the UK a limited political player. That said, it does it gives us the opportunity to be a friend, to partner without the presence and influence of our own governments. It means, distance aside, the role of PNGCP in its distinctively do-it-yourself approach remains as vital and relevant as ever. There is much to be done to sustain and encourage the friendship."



*Enjoying kai with the Sisters at Haruro*



*Waiting for the action to start at MMS*



*Student dancers in Morobe bilas at MMS Service*



*UK 'whiteskins' take the waters in the Newton College spa*



## PNG ODYSSEY

*In August, at the end of another busy working visit to PNG, Br Christopher John, Minister General for the Franciscan Brothers worldwide, provided the following report and photos for this Newsletter:*

“Greetings from Newton Theological College! This is the last night of nearly one month here and before that about 10 days at Haruro Friary. It’s been an interesting time, full of challenges and surprises, and also very rewarding.

I started off with the SSF brothers at Haruro Friary. We’d gathered for the annual provincial chapter. Because of Covid restrictions and last July’s Lambeth Conference, this was the first time I’d managed to get to a chapter since 2019. It’s been a big gap. The brothers face huge problems, much from lack of training, insufficient capacity in administration or leadership, or just the difficulty of living together in community. We’ve embarked on some projects to try to turn this around.

The two brothers on the chaplaincy team at Martyrs Memorial School come into Newton College on Tuesdays to study in the new Certificate of Theology course. This is part of their upgrading and will help the greater range of teaching the chaplains are being asked to do. After the major fire at the school, their housing at Martyrs is still a container - but we hope to raise funds and buy the materials needed to finish off a building started years ago for the Melanesian Brothers. Currently, this house is just framework and a roof. The school will supply its carpenters and the house will be extended to accommodate two Melanesian and two SSF brothers as a joint household to exercise their ministry in the school.

Oro Province was formerly a quiet backwater, but these days there is much increased violence in Popondetta and the villages around. The police are out of their depth, politicians incapable, and public services starved of resources. The governor of Oro Province has asked religious leaders to step up as peacemakers, so SSF is meeting with the Visitation Sisters and Melanesian Brothers to consider this. From my days in Peace and Conflict Studies, I’m looking to see what NGOs we could partner with.

We’re also hoping to renovate the friary buildings, one at a time. The first step will provide rooms for two Solomon Island brothers to come over to help the PNG brothers. Early next year, we could be welcoming Brothers Clifton Henry and Stephen Hovu. The friary connection to mains electricity had so many difficulties. Finally, after a second contractor to fix the problems caused by the first, we’re awaiting the inspector from Port Moresby to certify it, then the Easy Pay meters will go in and we’ll be online.

Unfortunately, the Visitation Sisters are too far from the main road to be connected but, with external funding, they’re working to repair and extend the existing solar system to cover all the convent buildings as well as outdoor security lighting. With this funding some sisters will also do useful practical courses such as bookkeeping and sewing.

Most of this visit I’ve been at Newton College. Before my SSF life I was a professional librarian and, since, have had a lot of practice in IT. When Acting Principal, Bishop Jeffrey Driver, asked if I knew a retired librarian in Australia to come to the college to help upgrade their library systems and train the staff, it felt like a job for me!

The college has had a significant amount of upgrading and renovation over the last few years. Curricula have been revised; staff qualifications are being upgraded; teaching and study facilities, including the library, are being made functional once again. Staff and students using the library can now consult the catalogue on a computer in the library and soon will be able to access a range of journals online, rather than in print form. For this, we’ve been setting up a network and importing the old catalogue. Now the staff have the lengthy task of finding and entering all the books which are not yet catalogued. We’ve discovered a number of very rare books, especially from the early mission days, to be kept safe and, hopefully, digitised for wider availability. I’ve found a great sense of achievement, particularly in the library work. Skills from 45 years ago are not so rusty and with my acquired IT experience have been incredibly useful.



*Br Christopher John with the SSF Chapter in PNG*



*Francis and Papuan Brother*



*Sunday mass at Haruro Friary*



*Barox, Stella & Trevor installing new library catalogue*



*Fellowship after Newton College Mass*



*Newton College kindergarden*

More widely, I've seen in PNG just how crucial good leadership is if resources and opportunities are not to be squandered. With it, an institution can be changed round and made functional again, with the members feeling pride and satisfaction in what they accomplish. In this, both Martyrs School and Newton Theological College are now well-placed for helping nurture our future generations in PNG.

PS: My return to Australia was a chain of delays and cancellations, which had me waiting at Girua Airport, Popondetta, for 12 hours. Finally, the rescue aircraft they sent in to take away what was, by then, three Dash-8 loads of passengers was, after landing, grounded with a mechanical issue! The consequent overnight stay in Port Moresby brought the unexpected delight of catching up with my fellow Kiwis, just arriving for the Partners Meeting. Finally, my Qantas flight to Australia was delayed, I missed the connection to Newcastle and got back to my base at Stroud 36 hours later than planned!"

*Our warmest congratulations go to Br Christopher John. Earlier this year, he was invited to Lambeth Palace to receive the Cross of St Augustine from the Archbishop of Canterbury. This well-deserved honour was in recognition not just of his leadership of the Franciscan Order, but of his wider contribution to the worldwide Anglican Communion, including leading the chaplaincy teams at the last two Lambeth Conferences. Editor*



*Brs Christopher John & Laurence await the rescue plane at Girua Airport!*

## TRAGIC HIGHLAND ACCIDENT

July brought news of a terrible road accident in Aipo Rongo Diocese. A diocesan party of 17 were returning to Mount Hagen after a week-long youth crusade and a 500-person confirmation service at Koinambe. The driver lost control of the hired vehicle and went over a small cliff. Acting Archbishop, Nathan Ingen, and his Diocesan Secretary Dick Kolai, sitting in the front sustained only minor physical injuries, but those behind were much more seriously hurt.

Tragically, Mother Juliet Kolai died from her injuries very shortly afterwards. She has since been buried at Gavun, her husband Dick Kolai's village. Mother Jesicah Ingen received serious head injuries and broken bones in her left hand. It took four hours before a hired helicopter was able to airlift her and Bishop Nathan out to Mount Hagen hospital. There, she had two head operations before being released home several weeks later and is making a slow, but steady, recovery.



*Mother Jessica leaving Mt Hagen Hospital*

It was late October a full three months after the accident, before a visiting specialist was able to deal with her head injury.

Several Anglican Youth members were also seriously injured in the accident, all receiving fractures, sprains and lacerations. After overnight care in Koinambe Anglican Health Centre, a chartered plane flew them out to Kudjip Nazarene Hospital where some received initial treatment before discharge home. Three teenage girls, all priests' daughters, stayed in intensive care. Lovelyn, daughter of Fr Jepheth Walepo, was soon discharged home, with a programme of medical follow-up. News of the condition of Serah and Anita, daughters of Fr Adam Wali, Kerina Evangelists' College Chaplain, was initially much more concerning with Anita paralysed. Happily, they have both been helped to make a good recovery and are now back at home.

It is with deepest sympathy we remember in our prayers Dick Kolai as he grieves for the untimely loss of Mother Juliet and for all the others involved in this traumatic accident, we also pray for their full recovery.



## PNG, ACPNG & PNGCP NEWS

- Past Newsletters told of Jean Ifuda, a dedicated Senior School Headteacher in Port Moresby, using her school holidays and own resources to establish the Kiki Early Learning Centre to educate young children in her isolated, coastal home near Tufi. Recognising her enterprise and the commitment of the local volunteers providing this phonics-led approach, PNGCP provided a couple of targeted grants to help this development. Now, with an Australian NGO helping with the supply of materials, a successful local businessman is building them a permanent classroom.
- St Margaret's Community Health Worker Training School on the Diocesan Campus at Popondetta is currently closed because the annual government funding for this national training institution has not come through
- In October, together with bishops from Vanuatu, Philippines and Australia, NGI Bishop Reg Makele travelled to the Solomons to attend the Melanesian Brotherhood's 15th Great Conference. At the capital, Honiara, they were welcomed by MBH Companions at St Barnabas Cathedral before travelling to the MBH headquarters at Tabalia. Other visits included the grave of the MBH founder, Ini Kopuria, and the Chapel of the Seven Martyrs of 2003. New regional Head Brothers were elected to serve for the next four years, with Br Joe for PNG.



+Reg visits MBH founder's grave in Solomons

- Ahead of the election of a new bishop for Dogura Diocese, Simon Giton has drawn attention to the poor state of repair of Dogura Cathedral and, with no local funds or expertise to tackle this, shared a plea for outside help. It is clear that, rather than this iconic, once-proud building, ACPNG will soon have a ruin on their hands if the roof is not fixed.
- The September Supporters' Day in the Anglican Communion Office, London, again proved a most enjoyable and informative occasion for participants. As well as the many memories shared and acquaintances renewed, communion was held in the chapel, with lunch provided afterwards. Formally, as described more fully elsewhere in this Newsletter, there was an update on the current life and challenges facing the Franciscan Brothers in PNG from the Order's Minister General, Brother Christopher John (visiting the UK with PNG Brother Laurence). Bishop Jonathan gave feedback from the recent Partners' Meeting with ACPNG in Popondetta and Bishop Peter described the accompanying Martyrs' Day memorial service and the celebration of Martyrs' Memorial School (MMS) 75th anniversary. Additional visual inputs included: one of the late Ted Kelly's films, 'Dogura 1976'; very recent material being turned into a You Tube video, on Newton College called 'NTC forming the future' with Bishop Jeffrey Driver speaking about the College: current ACPNG material on continuing Church life; and clips from the MMS anniversary celebrations, including pupils singing and dancing at the Eucharist.



Dogura Cathedral dilapidation



Current MMS chaplains' portacabin



MMS chaplains' house for completion

- Finally, with heartfelt thanks to the churches, groups and individuals who made this possible, PNGCP's Management Committee recently made grants to: equip all graduating from Newton College this year with a sewing-machine (helped by a generous Wantok Support grant); £3,500 to SSF to complete the chaplains' accommodation at Martyrs School (including a major grant from Dewsbury Parish Church where Revd Vivian Redlich was a Curate); and, including a further donation from St Mary's, Dalmahoy, a final grant of £8,080 to complete the Kaironk Health Centre described in previous Newsletters. Together, we are making a difference!

Grateful thanks for help in compiling this Newsletter to: +Reginald Makele; Br Christopher John; Simon Giton, +Peter & Sue Ramsden; Fr Luscomb Bera; Revd Phil Charlesworth; Janet Wells; +Jonathan Meyrick; Revd Paul Devenport; Jan Nicholson; William Spooner; +Jeffrey Driver; Kola Akinola; +Nathan Ingen; and Jasper Rea. As always, Newsletter ideas, comments or concerns to John Rea [johnhellarea@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:johnhellarea@yahoo.co.uk)

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